

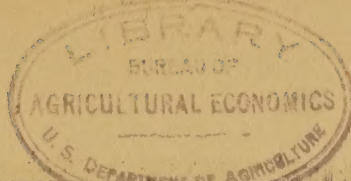
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REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON PROJECTS

AND CORRELATION OF RESEARCH, 1929\*

It is gratifying to report progress in the growth of cooperation in research between the experiment stations themselves and with the Department of Agriculture. The record shows nearly 1,100 active cooperative projects. This compares with about 900 projects in the previous year, equal to an increase of about 22 per cent. All of the States were represented in these cooperative enterprises, the stations in California, North Carolina, Washington, Minnesota, Montana, and Wisconsin leading, with 49, 47, 43, 40, 39, and 36 projects, respectively. While the maximum numbers with individual States show little increase, the distribution among States is larger, reflecting the extended scope of this joint action.

The record also indicates that 20 major regional projects were in operation which involved the cooperation of groups of States, varying in number from 3 to 34, and usually included from 1 to 3 bureaus of the Department of Agriculture. Of these, the work on quality of meat, soft pork, corn improvement, oil sprays, avoidance of spray residues, cereal and forage crop insects, and the growth of wool are especially outstanding in the completeness of their cooperative organization and effectiveness of operation.

As usual, a very large proportion of the cooperative projects included collaboration with the Department of Agriculture. Indeed the formal cooperation under agreements which define the terms of participation and the parts to be carried by the cooperating parties has been largely between the experiment stations and the Department. Such terms of agreement or understanding are recognized as desirable by both agencies. They should preferably be sufficiently definite to define the particular subject or phase they are concerned with, and at the same time flexible enough to meet the changing needs as investigation progresses. They provide for an amount of leadership which promotes cohesion and sustained interest. Probably proposals for such cooperation originate most frequently from the bureaus of the Department of Agriculture, although such suggestions not infrequently initiate with the stations.

Although cooperation among the stations was much discussed with the inauguration of the Purnell Act and it had been anticipated that a special impulse would be given by the Purnell fund in that direction, evidently that has not been the case as indicated by the support of cooperation from that source. Of the nearly 1,100 cooperative projects on record, only 136 involved support from the Purnell fund. This is only one-eighth, or 12.5 per cent, of the total number. Evidently a large proportion are on State funds.

While the practice of cooperation or correlation has made steady

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\*Presented at the annual convention of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities at Chicago, November 13, 1929.



growth, formal cooperation on the national projects, with an analysis of the subject and a division among investigators of the various things necessary to be done, has not made notable headway in most lines. For one thing, there is a lack of organization or of definite affiliation of individual workers with a constituted group. Such an organization of the projects as would insure their being covered systematically and recognize responsibility for integral parts has rarely been effected. Consciousness of membership in a common cause has not been a conspicuous product of operations under the national projects set up nearly five years ago.

The reason for this is not entirely clear. It suggests a lack of readiness to conform to a general plan, such, for example, as is implied in the cooperation with the Department of Agriculture. The fact that a given investigator is working along the general lines of one of the national projects does not necessarily imply that he is actuated by any motive of joining his effort to that of others, or that the subject is being advanced in any more systematic or orderly manner. Organization of the problem, and to a certain extent of those working under it, seems essential to success in this type of research.

A new step has been taken in the direction not only of the cooperation between different institutions, but between several subject matter specialists, in outlining a project on Rural Family Living. In the belief that studies of the rural family and rural living standards involved approach and consideration from various angles, a committee composed of representatives from the agricultural economics, home economics, and rural organization groups has been working for some time on a joint project, and recently has presented an outline for acceptance as a national cooperative project. The new project is entitled "Rural Family Living: Content, Adequacy, and Conditioning Factors." It deals with the food, clothing, housing, and other items of the family budget; the participation of the family in community organization and institutions; the use of time; and the income and the economic history of the family.

The study falls within the three fields of home economics, rural sociology, and agricultural economics, and is recommended for participation by the three groups of specialists. It is an ambitious undertaking and will call for much attention in arranging details; but the fact that the three groups were able to unite on the general plan is a hopeful sign.

In addition to formal cooperation, there is a type of correlated research which grows out of group meetings or conferences of workers in a limited, common field. Such conferences are quite free and informal, but they bring together those who have something to contribute to the common field and an interest in furthering investigation in the most effective manner. Their discussions bring out what is under way and the general status of inquiry, with the need for strengthening or extending the investigations in certain directions on the basis of results and the opening up of the subject. Needless repetition or duplication is incidentally checked, and the investigators are stimulated to make their work forward-looking in the light of the general judgment of the group.

Group contacts of various kinds are on the increase. They are regarded by some as the most effective type of coordinated research, especially in the advanced ranges and among mature specialists. Despite their informal-



ity, usually there is a nominal or accepted leadership---frequently some outstanding person, which serves to guide the effort and make it effective.

In less advanced fields, however, where the lines are not well marked out and the research done has been scattering and somewhat desultory, more definite study of problems and organization of inquiry along specific lines still seems highly important. It has been somewhat slow in getting under way. The situation itself is an argument for more directed attempts toward correlation.

The logic of such group action recently has been emphasized in connection with the announcement of a large cooperative enterprise for the furthering of research, with the support of a group of scientific men which carries much weight. The terse and unequivocal declaration is made that, "The day of the isolated experimenter and of fragmentary problems is passing. Unless we find means of shaping our problems into coherent plans of larger unity, unless we find means of carrying out vital research and postponing the merely interesting, and unless we can pool our constructive and critical abilities, we shall be out of step with the advance of the scientific method." 1/

While said with particular reference to psychological research, it is applicable to considerable parts of our research and experiment in agriculture. Here the need of coherent plans of larger unity, emphasis on the things which are vital, and the pooling of constructive and critical abilities are matters whose importance can not be overestimated.

A great movement has been set on foot to bring about cooperation in the agricultural industry. Already it is making the demand felt for more positive, safely applicable information on a great variety of subjects. The need is for well-rounded and coordinated knowledge in place of fragmentary information which must be summarized and interpreted before it can be used widely. The occasion presents an unusual challenge to the agencies relied upon to furnish the basis of progress in knowledge and understanding of agricultural problems.

In carrying out its function, the Joint Committee on Projects and Correlation of Research, representing this association and the Federal Department, has felt the need of more effective means of bringing about correlation. To aid in this, the Chief of the Office of Experiment Stations has been made Assistant Director of Scientific Work and the Office of Experiment Stations thus made a part of the Office of the Director of Scientific Work, with direct relations to the research work of all the bureaus of the Department as well as of the experiment stations.

It is planned to add to the office force from time to time men of recognized ability to lead in project correlation both within and outside the Department. It is hoped to have available for easy reference and review all projects of the Department as well as of the stations, and to

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1/ Prof. Knight Dunlap of Johns Hopkins University, in press announcement of the National Institute of Psychology.



initiate conferences and cooperation whenever such are desirable. A number of joint committees with this in view have already been established. Continued support for research depends upon the advance that may be accomplished through effective correlation and cooperation.

This is an important step by the Department of Agriculture in the direction of correlation and cooperation, which it is hoped will enlist the support of the experiment stations.

The broader relationships of research are believed to merit the studious attention of directors in planning their programs, and especially in inaugurating new projects or lines of work. Whether a subject in which there is regional or widespread interest shall be investigated independently and without due regard to what others are doing, or to the general advancement of the subject, assuredly is a matter for administrative consideration.

Research ought not to be regarded merely from the local standpoint. The experiment stations constitute a national system and they bear an intimate relation to the Federal Department of Agriculture. Correlation of their efforts is essential to economy of effort and efficient progress. After it has been effected there will still remain sufficient individual opportunity and institutional initiative for self-expression.

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